

REMARKS

Summary of Office Action

Claims 1-10 were pending in this application.

The Examiner found persuasive applicant's arguments in the October 13, 2006 Reply. However, the claims have been rejected on the following new grounds:

Claims 1-9 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious from Schäffler-Wachter et al. U.S. Patent No. 6,402,752 (hereinafter "Schäffler") in view of Katz U.S. Patent No. 5,989,254 (hereinafter "Katz").

Claims 1-8 and 10 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious from Schäffler in view of Nichols U.S. Patent No. 6,090,111 (hereinafter "Nichols").

The Examiner also objected to the abstract for exceeding 150 words in length.

Summary of Applicant's Reply

Applicant has amended the abstract to conform to the 150-word limit.

Applicant also has amended claims 1 and 3 and added new claims 11-20 to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter that applicant regards as his invention.

No new matter has been added.

Reconsideration of this application in view of the amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

Rejections of Claims 1-10 Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1-9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious from Schäffler in view of Katz. Claims 1-8 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious from Schäffler in view of Nichols.

These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 has been amended to require the arresting means to extend “continuously, concentrically ... around the central axis ..., the concentric continuity of the arresting means interrupted by the first and second channels” (*see, e.g.*, bulges 15 in applicant’s FIGS. 1 and 2).

Schäffler does not disclose or suggest such arresting means. Instead, Schäffler discloses a pair of ridges 12 each extending longitudinally parallel to axis A on opposite sides of inner part 6, and a pair of complementary slots 13 each also extending longitudinally parallel to axis A in opposite sides of outer part 7.

Schäffler’s pair of ridges 12 and slots 13 do not extend continuously and concentrically around central axis A. Accordingly, there is no concentric continuity interrupted by Schäffler’s rod channel (seat half 14).

Katz and Nichols were both cited to show teachings of securing means and, thus, do not make up for the deficiencies of Schäffler.

Therefore, neither the combination of Schäffler and Katz nor the combination of Schäffler and Nichols results in applicant’s invention as defined in amended independent claim 1. Thus, claim 1 is not obvious from either combination and should be allowable.

Accordingly, dependent claims 2-10 should also be allowable, because dependent claims are allowable if their independent claim is allowable.

Moreover, applicant's amended claim 3, which requires the plurality of bulges and the plurality of depressions to be each aligned parallel to the central axis, is also not obvious from either combination, because Schäffler's pair of ridges 12 and pair of complementary slots 13 are not each aligned parallel to Schäffler's axis A. In contrast, ridges 12 and slots 13 are each positioned laterally opposite each other about axis A.

Accordingly, applicant respectfully requests that the rejections of claims 1-10 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn.

New Claims 11-18

New independent claim 11 requires complementary projections and recesses for securing the sealing cap to the connection element, wherein the projections and recesses provide a plurality of discrete axial latch positions parallel to the central axis. Furthermore, each successive latch position axially displaces the sealing cap over the connection element. Support for this claim is found on page 5, paragraph 23, of applicant's specification.

Claim 11 should be allowable over Schäffler alone or in combination with either Katz or Nichols because none of these references discloses or suggests such structures for securing the sealing cap to the connection element. In particular, Schäffler's ridge 12 and slot 13 provide only a single latch position.

New dependent claims 12-18, which depend from claim 11, should also be allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 11 (i.e., dependent claims are allowable if their independent claim is allowable).

New Claims 19 and 20

New independent claim 19 requires a plurality of bulges and a plurality of depressions. The bulges are formed on the connection element and are aligned parallel to the central axis, and the depressions are formed in the internal surface of the second cavity of the sealing cap and are also aligned parallel to the central axis. The plurality of depressions are complementary to the plurality of bulges, and the sealing cap is sized and configured to engage the connection element such that each bulge of the connection element is operative to snap-fit into at least one depression of the sealing cap.

Claim 19 should be allowable over Schäffler alone or in combination with either Katz or Nichols because none of these references discloses or suggests such structures for snap-fitting the sealing cap to the connection element. In particular, Schäffler discloses only a single ridge 12 and single slot 13 aligned parallel to axis A.

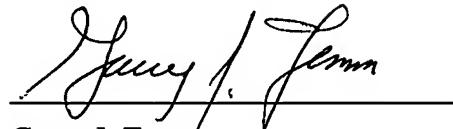
New dependent claim 20, which depends from claim 19, should also be allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 19 (i.e., dependent claims are allowable if their independent claim is allowable).

Conclusion

The foregoing demonstrates that claims 1-20 are allowable. This application is

therefore in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance are accordingly respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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